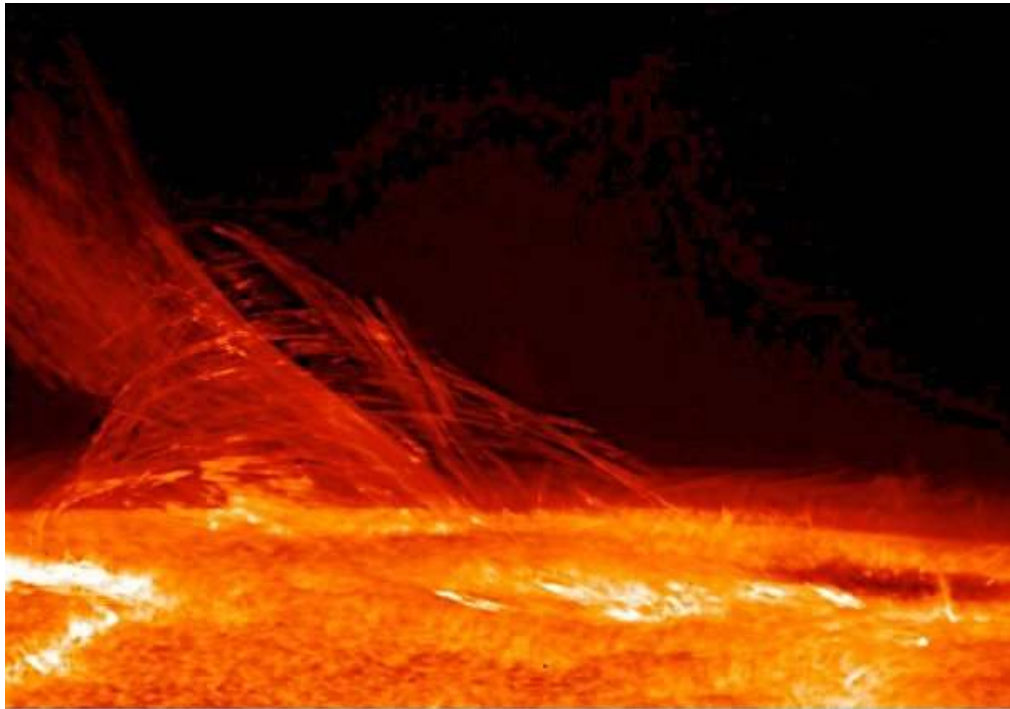




EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS

The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
Homeland Security and Emergency Management
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A flare on the surface of the sun releases energy that could affect a variety of technological systems on earth.

NASA photograph

SOLAR FLARE CAUSES NO HARM – The largest solar flare in five years reached the surface of the earth at 6:05 a.m. on March 8, but the energy burst was weaker than predicted and caused no damage. A second burst of energy two days later also failed to cause any disruptions. Solar flares emit charged particles and magnetic energy that are capable of disrupting power grids, communications and computer networks, navigation systems and satellites. The sun is currently at the most active point in its 11-year activity cycle. A major flare in 1859 wreaked havoc with telegraph systems at the beginning of the telecommunications era by inducing current on the lines. Operators found they could transmit messages with their batteries disconnected, but the current surge also caused equipment fires. In more recent times power grids in Canada have been disrupted by solar flares. HSEM issued an advisory to emergency managers in New Hampshire to ensure that they were aware of the possible effects of the solar activity.

WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED TO ASSESS EFFECTS OF TS IRENE – Three workshops have been scheduled for local officials, business operators and residents of the North Country on the effects of Tropical Storm Irene, the work done to repair the damage and ways to prevent future damage from a similar storm. The workshops will be conducted by representatives of state and federal agencies that make up the Post-Irene River Response Team, or PIRRT. They will be held on April 4 at Kennett Middle School in Conway for the area of the Saco and Rocky Branch Rivers; on April 11 at the Gorham Town Offices for the areas of the Peabody River and on April 18 for the area of the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River and Mad River. All three workshops will be held from 6-9 p.m. For more information, contact Jacquie Colburn, Program Manager, Rivers and Lakes Program, NH DES, at 603-271-2959 or jacquie.colburn@des.nh.gov

VERMONT PREVENTED FROM SHUTTING DOWN VY – A federal judge issued an order on March 19 blocking the state of Vermont from shutting down the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant when its state-issued Certificate of Public Good expired. Vermont and VY are engaged in a court battle over the state's right to shut the plant down, despite the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's renewal of its operating license for another 20 years. Vermont is the only state where state officials have a role in regulating a nuclear plant. The *Brattleboro Reformer* reported that Judge J. Garvan Murtha's order said the state could not order the closure of VY by blocking the storage of additional highly radioactive waste at the plant after the expiration of its license on March 21. The judge said the state can't attempt to close the plant because of the nuclear waste issue until all appeals in the case are heard.

UNUSUAL WINTER COMES TO AN END – Winter finally came to an end on March 20, but the 2011-12 season was noteworthy, not for storms, but for how mild it was. There were only two significant snowstorms, on Halloween weekend in October and on March 1. Snowfall measured at Concord through March 20 totaled 48.9 inches, compared to a normal total of 54.2 inches and last year's 76.9 inches. But instead of gradually warming spring temperatures, winter ended with the record-breaking temperature of 81 degrees, measured at Concord at 3:47 p.m. on March 18. The normal temperature for that date is 45 degrees and the previous record high was 72, set in 1903. Additional temperature records continued to fall during the following five days before more normal spring temperatures returned. The earliest ice out in history on Lake Winnepesaukee occurred on March 23.

The mild winter helped to hold down heating costs in the state. There were 4,822 heating degree days for the season through March 25, compared with a total normal for the period of 5,854.

WICKED WEATHER FORUM TO BE HELD IN PORTLAND – The National Weather Service Office in Gray, Maine, and the University of Southern Maine in Portland are teaming up to present The Portland Wicked Weather Forum, on Saturday, April 7, from 1-5 p.m. on the university campus. The purpose of the forum is to give the public an opportunity to learn more about weather and weather safety. Included in the program are presentations on hurricanes, tornadoes, lightning, and nor'easters, and how to prepare for these storms. Also included are talks on the extreme weather atop Mount Washington and on observing, forecasting, and broadcasting the weather. In addition to the program, the National Weather Service, Maine Emergency Management Agency, Mount Washington Observatory and other organizations will be available to answer questions and provide additional information about the weather and weather safety.

For more information about the forum or directions, visit the Gray Weather Service web site at <http://weather.gov/gyx> or call 207-688-3216.

RED CROSS GETS GRANT FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES – The American Red Cross of New Hampshire has received a \$25,000 grant from the N.H. Charitable Foundation to improve emergency services in the Upper Valley. The money will be used to recruit and train volunteers, for equipment, and to support new emergency services and disaster action teams. Red Cross is an important part of emergency management. In New Hampshire, it has 200 Disaster Action Teams with approximately 300 emergency-service volunteers trained in disaster response and recovery. Last year it responded to 171 disasters in New Hampshire and helped 748 people.

LEGISLATURE KILLS PROPOSED EM BILLS – Several bills that would have affected emergency management in New Hampshire were killed during the session. House Bill 1218 would have required the governor to obtain approval of the Executive Council and the Legislature before seeking federal disaster aid. That would have slowed down the process of applying for federal aid, just when the application needs to be expedited. HB 1248 required the removal of Canada from the International Emergency Management Group, effectively wiping out the cross-border mutual aid plan and the years of work that went into it. HB 1187 would have created a committee to make recommendations for state actions in the event that the federal government was not able to function. And House Joint Resolution 21 would have informed the U. S. Congress that the N.H. Legislature did not want the N.H. National Guard deployed outside of the state unless war was declared. All of those bills were killed by the full House on voice votes.

Another bill affecting emergency management remains under consideration in the Legislature. House Bill 574 would eliminate the governor's ability to take private property during a major disaster. The measure has passed the House and is scheduled for a hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 29. A number of emergency management officials are expected to testify against it.

SURVEY FINDS MAJORITY UNPREPARED FOR DISASTER – A survey by a marketing firm found that more than half of the people who responded to a poll believe they are not prepared for a disaster. Of those who are not prepared, 38 percent told Persuadable Research Corporation that preparing for a disaster never enters their mind. Forty-eight percent said they didn't have enough money to buy emergency supplies and 15 percent said they didn't have time. Of those who said they were prepared, 82 percent said they had experienced a disaster. Another 27 percent said they were prepared in order to take care of children or elderly parents.

The same poll showed little faith in government's ability to help during a disaster. Twenty-eight percent were uncertain about the government's response, while 30 percent were convinced the government would be incapable of aiding them.

Keep up with emergency preparedness information in New Hampshire on www.readynh.nh.gov and [Twitter.com/ReadyNH](https://twitter.com/ReadyNH).